

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 240145

13

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TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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TOSEC 454

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CY,EAIR, UK, TU

SUBJECT: NICOSIA AIRPORT (AEROFLOT OFFER TO CYPRUS AIRWAYS)

PARIS FOR HARTMAN. TOSEC FOR STABLER.

REF: NICOSIA 3811

1. DEPARTMENT OFFICER HAS DISCUSSED WITH BRITISH EMBASSY
OFFICER CYPRUS FOREIGN MINISTER CHRISTOPHIDES' APPROACH TO

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 240145

AMBASSADOR CRAWFORD RE AEROFLOT OFFER TO HELP BUILD AIRPORT

FACILITIES TO REPLACE NICOSIA AIRPORT. BRITISH HAVE REPORT FROM HIGH COMMISSIONER OLVER IN NICOSIA ON HIS CONVERSATION OCTOBER 29 WITH CHRISTOPHIDES ON SAME SUBJECT. CHRISTOPHIDES' APPROACH TO BRITISH WAS IDENTICAL TO THAT TO AMBASSADOR CRAWFORD (REFTEL) WITH FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS: (A) CHRISTOPHIDES SAID HIS GOVERNMENT FELT IT MUST REPLY TO RUSSIANS WITHIN ONE WEEK, AND (B) IN REPLY TO HIGH COMMISSIONER'S QUESTION, HE SAID HE SAW NO OBJECTION TO BRITISH MENTIONING SOVIET OFFER IN ANY DISCUSSIONS THEY MIGHT HAVE ON SUBJECT WITH TURKISH GOVERNMENT.

2. OLVER EXPRESSED OPINION THAT CHANCE OF BRITISH COMPANY'S MAKING A VIABLE COUNTEROFFER TO HELP WITH A NEW AIRPORT WAS VERY SLIGHT, THOUGH IT COULD PERHAPS BE EXPLORED. FAILING THAT HE SUGGESTED A SHOW OF PROGRESS ON NICOSIA AIRPORT TO GIVE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT GROUNDS FOR DELAYING ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET OFFER.

3- OLVER ALSO MENTIONED IN CABLE POSSIBILITY THAT UK MIGHT OFFER FACILITIES AT AKROTIRI SBA TEMPORARILY TO MEET CYPRUS GOVERNMENT'S NEEDS (THOUGH THERE ARE APPARENTLY ADMINISTRATIVE AND PERHAPS OTHER PROBLEMS FOR BRITISH IN THIS REGARD).

4. DEPARTMENT'S INITIAL ANALYSIS IS THAT ALTHOUGH CHRISTOPHIDES IS OBVIOUSLY USING AEROFLOT OFFER TO APPLY PRESSURE ON US, AND INDIRECTLY ON TURKEY, THERE IS ENOUGH CREDIBILITY IN SOVIET PROPOSAL TO CAUSE SERIOUS CONCERN. OUR INITIAL OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO DELAY CYPRUS GOVERNMENT'S ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET OFFER WHILE WAYS TO SATISFY THEIR LEGITIMATE NEED FOR AIRPORT FACILITY ARE EXPLORED. WE BELIEVE MOST REASONABLE AND FEASIBLE SOLUTION WOULD BE TO REOPEN NICOSIA AIRPORT ON BASIS ACCEPTABLE TO ALL. WE COULD TELL CHRISTOPHIDES THAT WE ARE SURPRISED THAT CYPRUS GOVERNMENT WOULD WANT TO DEVELOP AN ALTERNATE AIRPORT SINCE THIS WOULD TEND TO CONFIRM ECONOMIC DIVISION OF CYPRUS AND DELAY RETURN OF NICOSIA AIRPORT TO NORMAL OPERATION. IF HIS GOVERNMENT, IN SPITE OF THIS CONSIDERATION, WISHES TO CONSIDER DEVELOPMENT OF LARNACA AIRPORT, WE WOULD HOPE HASTY DECISION RE AEROFLOT OFFER WOULD NOT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 240145

BE MADE BEFORE ALTERNATIVES ARE EXPLORED. AT SAME TIME WE BELIEVE REOPENING OF NICOSIA AIRPORT SHOULD RECEIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION. IN THIS REGARD THE USG (SECRETARY KISSINGER) WOULD BE PREPARED TO TAKE UP THIS MATTER WITH TURKISH GOVERNMENT.

5. EMBASSIES LONDON, NICOSIA, ANKARA AND ATHENS SHOULD SUBMIT THEIR VIEWS AS TO WHAT ARRANGEMENTS FOR REOPENING

THE NICOSIA AIRPORT MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED. IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC, WE BELIEVE, TO EXPECT TURKISH GOVERNMENT TO AGREE TO OPENING AIRPORT UNLESS, AT THE LEAST, TURKISH CYPRIOT PARTICIPATION OF SOME KIND WERE ASSURED.

6. OUR RECOMMENDATION IS THAT THE SECRETARY AUTHORIZE AMBASSADOR CRAWFORD TO REPLY TO CHRISTOPHIDES ALONG LINES PARA 4, ABOVE. ON BASIS CHRISTOPHIDES' REPLY AND VIEWS OTHER EMBASSIES, SUBJECT COULD BE PURSUED FURTHER WITH TURKISH GOVERNMENT. INGERSOLL

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